

# WALKING FOR WELLNESS



Improving your health can be done by simply walking. Conditioning your heart and lungs with low intensity walking provides short and long term benefits. It can help lower your risk of heart disease by reducing high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and even help you shed a few extra pounds. Regular physical activity such as walking gives you more energy, tones your muscles, burns off extra calories, helps to control your appetite, and makes you feel and look better. Beginning a walking program is a positive step toward taking control of your health and helping to prevent disease.

## HELPFUL HINTS TO START A WALKING PROGRAM

1. Make walking a habit. Try to walk 3 to 6 times per week, start as low as 5 minutes and gradually work up to 20 to 40 minutes
  - Set up a specific time to walk during the day to establish a routine
  - Keep a records of how far and how long you walk so that you keep improving
  - Set goals to continue exercise and reward yourself with non-food items
2. Build Flexibility and strength in your muscles
  - Warm-up muscles to prevent injury by walking slowly for about 5 minutes
  - Cool down after walking by allowing about 5 minutes of slow walking to bring down your heart rate to resting
3. Make sure to have good form to prevent injury
  - Don't slouch! Keep your back straight with your stomach slightly contracted
  - Establish a walking rhythm that is comfortable for you
  - Keep arm motion natural with your arms bent at right angles
4. Increase speed, distance, and/or time
  - Pace yourself, don't over exert yourself. You should be able to walk and talk at the same time
  - If you feel you overdid it (soreness or excess fatigue), you may take a day off from walking. But remember to resume as soon as the soreness is tolerable!
  - Set goals to walk longer and faster than the day before
5. Plan for variety in a walking plan
  - Change speed and how long you walk from day to day
  - A change of scenery will add variety to your workout. Walk at the mall, a store, or a park
  - Have a friend walk with you to make it more fun
6. Always consult with your physician before initiating any exercise program